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Follow-up to the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted in response to General Assembly resolution 62/129 of 18 December 2007.

The report addresses the issues of family policy, integrating a family perspective into social protection and investing in intergenerational solidarity within families and communities. The report also provides updated information regarding the continued follow-up to the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family, based upon submissions by Member States.

The activities of the United Nations Programme on the Family are also highlighted. The report concludes with suggestions and recommendations concerning areas for future consideration by the General Assembly.

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I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 62/129 of 18 December 2007, entitled "Follow-up to the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family and beyond", the General Assembly encouraged Governments to continue to make every possible effort to realize the objectives of the International Year of the Family and to integrate a family perspective into national policymaking. The Assembly also invited Governments to continue to develop strategies and programmes aimed at strengthening national capacities to address national priorities relating to family issues and encouraged the United Nations Programme on the Family, within its mandate, to assist Governments in this regard.

2. The present report provides a synthesis of recent actions taken by those Governments which responded to the note verbale of 9 April 2009 seeking information on the implementation of activities related to General Assembly resolution 62/129. As at 26 June 2009, a total of 19 responses to the note verbale had been received from Algeria, Austria, Azerbaijan, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Finland, Greece, Indonesia, Japan, Malta, Peru, the Philippines, Qatar, the Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation, Switzerland, Ukraine and the Holy See.

3. Also used in the preparation of the present report were the findings of an expert group which held a meeting on the theme "Family policy in a changing world: promoting social protection and intergenerational solidarity". The expert group meeting was organized by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat in April 2009 in Doha, in cooperation with the Doha International Institute for Family Studies and Development.

II. Follow-up to the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family: family policy, social protection and intergenerational solidarity

4. Protection of the family by society and the State is enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Supporting families, providing social protection and furthering social integration through the strengthening of intergenerational solidarity are all important facets and objectives of social policy and social development. An analysis of the interrelationships among family issues, social protection and intergenerational solidarity can contribute to a better understanding of public policy options. Those interrelationships are of particular relevance during the current economic crisis, in which many families have been thrust into poverty and in which social protection and intergenerational solidarity are important coping mechanisms.

A. Family policy

Family policy and integrating a family perspective into policymaking

5. There is no general consensus among family policy scholars on how to define family policy. However, one approach used to discuss family policy and increase awareness of the policies that affect families is to make the distinction between explicit and implicit policies.

6. Explicit family policies include those policies and programmes that are deliberately designed to achieve specific objectives regarding the family unit, individuals in their family roles or children. Thus, explicit family policies may cover such major family functions as:[1]

(a) Family formation (such as laws and policies on marriage and divorce, domestic violence, family planning, policies to encourage childbearing, maternal health and the adoption of children);

(b) Economic welfare (such as providing income security for family members' basic needs, cash and tax benefits, employment-related benefits for working parents and inheritance law);

(c) Childrearing (such as child health and protection, childcare, the promotion of responsible parenting and the provision of foster care);

(d) Family caregiving (such as assistance for family members who are ill, frail, have disabilities, or older and in need of assistance or care).

7. In this context, family policy may include a diversity and multiplicity of policies rather than a single monolithic, comprehensive legislative act.

8. Implicit family policies are not specifically directed to any of the above-mentioned family functions but rather have indirect consequences on families and their children. They include actions taken in policy areas such as education, employment, health policy, including HIV/AIDS, housing and immigration.

9. In order to fully consider the effects on families of any policy, in particular implicit policies, it is necessary to analyse the policy from a family perspective in order to be fully aware of any unanticipated impacts and to improve policy consistency and coherence. This integration of a family perspective into policy analysis allows for the monitoring of a broad range of policies and actions in terms of their potential or actual impact on children and their families. This approach can be particularly helpful in identifying and correcting unintended negative consequences on families. Analysing public policies from a family perspective is therefore particularly important for those countries that do not have explicit family policies.

The effects and effectiveness of family policy initiatives

10. Whether countries have explicit or implicit family policies, or both, what is considered important by many family policy experts is that the policies in place reflect a deliberate political decision. Other elements of policy effectiveness include clarity and consistency, so that the elements of the policy and its objectives are fully understood and are not contradictory. A holistic approach to the formulation and implementation of public policy is also considered important for effectiveness, as often a country's family policy may be made up of a series of policies that may be fragmented or result in significant gaps where particular issues may not be addressed.

11. Monitoring the impact and effectiveness of family policies is often hampered by data gaps, such as the absence of systematic data on the well-being of the family

[1] Based upon Karen Bogenschneider, *Family Policy Matters: How Policymaking Affects Families and What Professionals Can Do* (Mahwah, New Jersey, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2006).

and family members. In order for a family policy and the policy instruments at the national level to be effective, a country must have an institutional mechanism responsible for overseeing, implementing and monitoring the policy and measuring its results.

12. Two important principles for consideration of the effects and effectiveness of family policy initiatives are child well-being and gender equality. Addressing and promoting child well-being through health care, quality childcare and child education and the promotion of responsible parenting is an important element of an effective family policy. Respect for gender equality is another important element, including awareness of the potential effects of policies on women and men and how they affect the status of women in the family and in society.

13. In both of those cases, this also implies implementing policies for the early detection, reporting and intervention in cases of abuse, including abuse of children and older persons, gender-based and all forms of domestic violence, providing appropriate services and law enforcement protection for the victims and setting appropriate consequences for the perpetrators, while also providing them with behavioural-change services and counselling.

Balancing work and family life

The competing tasks of female labour force participation and childcare

14. Balancing work and family life is high on the policy agendas of many countries, and the current demographic and social trends indicate that this demand will continue. The increase in female participation in the labour market calls for adjustment in the gender division of labour within the household and the sharing of family responsibilities. The rise in single parent families in which the parent is working in the labour force brings additional challenges.

15. The emerging family model of two working parents brings benefits but also demands social adaptations. While national experiences may vary, many societies were, and still are, organized around a form of family based on highly differentiated gender roles, with a breadwinner husband and a wife at home taking care of children and any older family members. No social provisions were necessary for very young children or the elderly, as their care fell on the mother at home.

16. Balancing work and family life is therefore not only a matter of providing assistance to women or families, but also a central issue for society to adapt to the new opportunities for women and the new family model of mothers participating in the labour force.

17. For the increasing number of families in which there is a working mother, coping with the competing activities of labour market work and caring for children means drawing from existing resources, be it from public policies, facilities provided by employers, which are usually limited or non-existent, or family and personal strategies. An absence of either public policies or employer facilities often puts the burden on the family network, usually on the working mother. When the strain between family and work increases, the consequences can be direct for both

employers, via reduced productivity or women giving up employment, and for the family and society, via women delaying or foregoing childbearing.[2]

18. Balancing work and family life therefore consists of addressing the specific issues and problems that working parents confront on a daily basis. These may include situations in which parents care for very young or ill children, or when they find it difficult to coordinate work and school schedules.

19. Concern has been expressed that the low fertility experienced in many countries could be directly related to difficulties in reconciling work and family life. An increasing number of developed countries have enacted policies and established facilities for combining work and childcare. In most of those countries, the traditional inverse relationship between the rate of participation of women in labour force and fertility has become positive: those countries now have higher fertility rates and also have high rates of female participation in the labour force.[3]

Policy instruments

20. Among the policy instruments aimed at reconciling work and the family are parental leave, childcare services and child benefits.

21. Parental leave includes maternity, parental childcare and paternity leave, and leave or a reduction of time worked for urgent family matters. Maternity leave varies by country according to the length of service and percentage of salary received. Parental childcare leave is intended for the care of small children at home by the mother or the father. Among the countries that have this leave policy, the most significant difference is whether or not the leave is paid. Two common features are the right of the parent to return to her or his employment after the period of leave and the explicit provision that the leave may be taken by either the mother or the father. Despite this provision, the leave is taken by an overwhelming majority of women. Paternity leave has become available in some countries based on the assumption that having both parents taking leave would result in fathers being more actively engaged in childcare. A reduction of time worked and leave for urgent family matters are less common and vary significantly by country.

22. While childcare services are available in many countries, in most it is the family that takes care of very young children. For working mothers, the early childhood period is particularly challenging, even when childcare services are available and utilized. For children over three years of age, early education tends to be included in the general school system, with the focus on education rather than care. These preschool services may be funded publicly or privately, with the public-private ratio varying among countries.

23. Child benefits, such as cash allowances to cover childcare expenses, have played a growing role as a way of supporting the balance between work and family life in developed countries and in some economies in transition. The rationale is that they allow parents to freely choose the modality care of given to their children. They can also be received as a form of remuneration for a stay-at-home parent, who

[2] Ibid.

[3] Juan Antonio Fernandez Cordon, "Policy issues for reconciling work and the family", paper prepared for the United Nations expert group meeting on the theme "Family policy in a changing world: promoting social protection and intergenerational solidarity", held from 14 to 16 April 2009 in Doha.

is usually the mother, and is therefore perceived by many as a preference for childcare by the mother.

Special issues regarding family policymaking in developing countries

Cultural diversity and customs

24. In some developing countries, the formulation of a comprehensive national family policy can be complicated by social heterogeneity. Considerable cultural diversity may exist between regions, rural and urban areas, social classes and different religious and ethnic groups. Countries vary in their multiculturalism and microregions, which may have differences in levels of female literacy, average age at marriage, incidence of dissolution of marriage, family and household size, rates of female participation in the workforce, marital practices, gender relations and the authority structure within the family.

25. Barriers to the creation of a national policy in an area as personal as family may be intricate and may have formed over several hundreds of years. In particular, minority groups may be suspicious of initiatives to form a national policy, viewing it as an attempt to force them to abandon long-held traditions. It may also be interpreted as an increase in State intervention in the area of family, which could generate opposition from certain groups.

26. Many long-held family traditions and customs are quite positive and result in families that are strong and supportive. However, there may also be harmful customs or practices that hurt family members and violate their human rights, such as female genital mutilation, child marriage, gender-based violence and child abuse or abandonment. In such cases, the first challenge is to address the harmful custom through an explicit family policy or law. Subsequent challenges include awareness-raising, particularly in remote areas, and the implementation and enforcement of the policy or law.

Resources, education and capacity-building

27. In many developing countries, there are low levels of financial resources for the formulation and implementation of family policies, and they may not be given the same priority or sense of urgency as other policies, such as poverty eradication or economic development.

28. Education in family issues and, in particular, in family policy is often very limited. While departments of social work may exist at universities, programmes focused on families, such as family studies, family psychology, or family counselling, are usually non-existent, resulting in a shortage of local family scholars and practitioners.

29. In order to build capacity in this area, family life education could be introduced at different instructional levels, such as at universities, secondary schools, community centres and hospitals, in order to have qualified personnel to provide family social services. Those services would have a focus on family relations, marriage and parenting. Premarital and marital counselling could be provided and support groups formed to promote marital and parenting quality, effective conflict-resolution skills and financial management knowledge. The international community could also increase efforts to develop or provide access to training in family policy for government officials.

Families, displacement and international migration

30. Many developing countries are affected by displacement and migration, which have very visible impacts on families. Displacement is usually driven by distress. Humanitarian crises and natural disasters are increasing and conflicts are becoming more protracted, resulting in large numbers of internal and cross-border displaced persons and refugees. Migration in search of work is becoming a way of life, with close to 200 million international migrants recorded globally.[4] If internal migrants were included, the number would be much higher. Whether there is displacement or migration, either of individual family members or of the whole family unit, there can be significant psychological impacts and social costs resulting from the separation of family members. In some countries, significant numbers of children live without one or both parents, who are working abroad.

B. Integrating a family perspective into the promotion of social protection

31. Social protection plays a crucial role in social development. Article 16.3 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights directly links social protection to the family: "The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State."

32. At its thirty-ninth session in February 2001, the United Nations Commission for Social Development addressed the priority theme "Enhancing social protection and reducing vulnerability in a globalizing world".[5] In its resolution 39/1, the Commission recognized the need for further analyses, research and sharing of views with regard to enhancing social protection and reducing vulnerability in a globalizing world (see E/2001/26-E/CN.5/2001/9, chap. I). A relevant social development objective is therefore to examine social protection in the specific context of family policy and the integration of a family perspective into social protection systems. This objective is of particular relevance for the well-being of families during periods of social and economic stress, such as the current economic crisis.

Social protection and family policy

33. Social protection may be seen as an explicit approach to attenuate, reduce, mitigate or cope with the vulnerability of and risk to individuals and, by implication, families. It can be broadly understood as a set of public and private policies and programmes undertaken by societies in response to various contingencies to offset income reductions or absence of work and provide people with health care, housing and other social services. [6] Social protection is often seen in the context of social assistance, which encompasses public actions that are designed to transfer resources to groups deemed eligible due to deprivation, as well as social insurance, financed by contributions, where individuals, families or

[4] See "Trends in Total Migrant Stock: the 2005 Revision", p. 1, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division.

[5] See report of the Secretary-General (E/CN.5/2001/2) and *Report on the World Social Situation 2001* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.01.IV.5), chap. XIV,.

[6] See *Report on the World Social Situation 2001* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.01.IV.5), chap. XIV.

households protect themselves against risk by pooling resources with a larger number of similarly exposed people.

34. Social protection policies and systems and family policies are closely interrelated. Traditionally, kinship and the family served as the basic system of social protection. Currently, in some countries the State has assumed much of the responsibility for social protection, while in other countries the family continues to provide many social protection functions, such as caregiving to older family members. Social protection policies may be designed specifically for families, such as assistance to families with children, or in direct relation to family, such as policies to protect children from family-based child abuse. Other social protection policies, such as unemployment benefits and pension systems, also affect families indirectly.

35. It is therefore recommended that the process of formulating and implementing social protection systems and long-term development plans fully consider family as a key socio-economic unit in society. It is also recommended that social protection policies be aligned with family support policies in all areas and aspects, including health, education, housing, retirement, income support and food security.

36. In many developing countries, a significant proportion of the population is engaged in rural or urban self-employment and is therefore outside any formal system of social protection. Extending formal and public social protection to traditionally excluded groups is a challenge. In recent years, programmes that cover short- and long-term social contingencies have seen a surge of interest by developing countries and among donor agencies. This has been a result in part of the experiences in Latin America around conditional cash transfers, which are often family based, and the experience of many African countries in intergenerational care — again, usually family based — in the context of HIV/AIDS.

37. However, at the same time, in both developing and developed countries there has been an overall reduction in public social spending during the past three decades in the context of policies promoting economic liberalization and reduced government. These spending cuts and the resultant public financing strain have reduced the coverage of social protection as well as the provision of social services, including the provision of family services, resulting in negative impacts to family well-being.

Children, families and social protection

38. In many countries, children remain one of the most vulnerable groups in society. They also comprise a large proportion of the population in developing countries. Children are overrepresented among the poor, whereas the impact of poverty and social exclusion are compounded for girls, children with disabilities and children from marginalized communities. They do not generally have voice when they are very young, and are reliant primarily on their parents and family.

39. Oversight bodies that protect child rights often do not exist, and social services in support of the family tend to be fragmented. Neglect of children in the areas of health, nutrition, education and care can have effects that are irreversible. Against

such a background, the basic principles that should guide the development of child-sensitive social protection are:[7]

(a) Making special provision to reach the children who are most vulnerable and excluded, including children without parental care, as well as children who are marginalized within their families or communities due to gender, disability, ethnicity or other factors;

(b) Intervening as early as possible where children are at risk in order to prevent irreversible impairment or harm to children;

(c) Addressing the age and gender specific risks and vulnerabilities of children; and

(d) Recognizing that families raising children need support.

Gender, families and social protection policies

40. Women play a central role in the family. They contribute to all the functions of the family, including, but not limited to, family creation, economic support, child-rearing and family caregiving. They keep their families together, undertake the provision of care for those who are sick, play a key role in securing food and are, in general, the backbone of socio-economic activities. It is important that social protection schemes and programmes recognize the centrality of women in families and seek to fully support women and achieve gender equality.

41. However, many women may be caught in the paradoxical situation that, having worked hard to care for and protect their families all their lives, the patriarchal nature of their society does not give them equal treatment in social protection when they need assistance from either informal institutions or formal systems. There are many gender inequality challenges that they face, including local customs and legal institutions that often discriminate against the ownership and control of land and resources by women and limit their access to employment, education and public services, as well as the disproportionate effects of domestic violence.

42. Of particular concern to family policy and social protection is gender-based violence. One major challenge is attitudinal change on the part of families and communities that hold on to cultural practices of violence to girls and women, such as early marriage or spousal abuse of wives. Governments have a major responsibility to spearhead attitudinal change towards traditions that foster the subordination of women by men and that sustain gender discrimination and practices that are harmful to the health and welfare of women and girls.

Families affected by migration and displacement

43. Many policies that address migration focus on the economic aspects and legal protection issues of receiving countries. There is usually not much attention paid to the psychosocial impact that migration has on families and the support they need to

[7] See United Nations Children's Fund, "Advancing Child Sensitive Social Protection", joint statement of Governments, international organizations and research bodies concerned with social development and child rights, draft June 2008, (to be issued in 2009) as quoted in Gabrielle Koehler, "Social protection and developing countries: a view from South Asia", paper prepared for the United Nations expert group meeting on "Family policy in a changing world: promoting social protection and intergenerational solidarity", held from 14 to 16 April 2009 in Doha, p. 5.

adapt to this phenomenon. Policies need to be developed to support migrant families and children, through programmes that provide information on migration to assist families — both the family members who migrate as well as those left behind — to cope with the challenges of migration, as well as individual and group support for children, parents, grandparents and other family caregivers.

44. In addition, migrants and their families from developing countries may not be eligible for social protection or other family services in host countries and usually do not acquire health insurance or old-age pension entitlements or face obstacles to the portability of pension benefits, which leaves them especially vulnerable. Given the scope and the scale of the issue, social protection for migrants, their families, and especially for refugees and internally displaced persons/families, is an urgent policy issue.

C. Investing in intergenerational solidarity within families and communities

45. The promotion of social integration is one of the major pillars of the World Summit for Social Development, which was held in Copenhagen in 1995. Member States of the United Nations committed themselves, inter alia, to strengthening institutions that enhance social integration, recognizing in this context the central role of the family and providing it with an environment that assures its protection and support. Important aspects of social integration are social inclusion, social cohesion and intergenerational solidarity, which are often interconnected.

46. The Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing 2002[8] adopted at the United Nations Second World Assembly on Ageing, states that solidarity among generations at all levels — in families, communities and nations — is fundamental for the achievement of a society for all ages. Despite geographic mobility and other pressures of contemporary life that can keep people apart, the great majority of people in all cultures maintain close relations with their families throughout their lives. Those relationships work in both directions, with older persons often providing significant financial contributions as well as in the education and care of grandchildren and other kin. The Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing therefore contains an explicit objective to strengthen solidarity through equity and reciprocity between generations.[9]

47. Intergenerational relations are also relevant to youth policies and were included as one of the five additional issues in the Supplement to the World Programme of Action on Youth which was adopted by the General Assembly in 2007 (see General Assembly resolution 62/126, annex). The Supplement notes that trends in globalization and development have resulted in situations in which many young people are cut off from their families and, due to migration, older persons may be left behind without the traditional support of families or adequate financial resources. While older persons lose opportunities to receive support from younger members of their families, younger persons also lose opportunities to benefit from the knowledge and guidance of older family members.

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[8] *Report of the Second World Assembly on Ageing, Madrid, 8-12 April 2002* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.02.IV.4) chap. I, resolution 1, annexes I and II.

[9] Ibid., chap. II, para. 44.

48. Scholars of intergenerational solidarity often consider that the interdependence among generations during the life cycle can be analysed at two levels:[10]

(a) The macrosocial level among age groups or cohorts who identify with specific events or national and global situations;

(b) The microsocial level within families among grandparents, parents and grandchildren. Relationships among the generations include those among members of nuclear and extended families, such as aunts, uncles, cousins and siblings.

49. As the most basic social institution, the family is the natural and essential social structure in which intergenerational solidarity is created and reinforced. It represents the first group into which one enters at birth, and family ties remain primary over the life course. Indeed, the first intergenerational relationship is that between parents and children.

50. During the past several decades, there have been significant changes in demographic behaviour that affect intergenerational relations and the life course of family members, including: reduced fertility; increases in out-of-wedlock births; rising age at marriage; increased prevalence of singlehood and divorce; increased age at which children leave their parents; increased number of children living with one parent; increases in the number of older persons living both longer and independently; and increases in the number of families affected by migration.

51. In most countries, changes in patterns of family formation and dissolution and the diversification of households have led to more complex and diverse family and household structures. This diversity can create uncertainty in intergenerational relations and expectations and can have specific effects on life course role transitions, such as grandparenthood and retirement. The structural organization of the family is particularly critical for those in middle age, a phase in life when individuals are likely to play multiple roles of parent, worker, breadwinner or co-breadwinner and caregiver to older parents.

52. As a result of increased life expectancy, some individuals will be members of three- or even four-generation families for longer periods of time, while declining fertility rates and delayed parenthood suggest that others may never be members of such multigenerational families.

53. Another area of change related to increased life expectancy is the unprecedented growth in the number and proportion of older persons in most countries around the world, a trend which is expected to continue. The proportion of people age 60 and over is increasing faster than any other age group. Within this group, that of the "oldest old" is also growing.

54. While population ageing is not in itself a problem, it does entail a changing balance between older and younger people in society and the challenge of establishing new generational relations of mutual support and inclusion at both the microlevel of families and macrolevel of societies.

[10] Vern L. Bengstrom and Petrice S. Oyama, "Intergenerational solidarity and conflict: what does it mean and what are the big issues?", paper prepared for the United Nations expert group meeting on the theme "Intergenerational solidarity: strengthening economic and social ties", held from 23 to 25 October 2007, in New York.

55. The increase in life expectancy of older persons also means that a growing number of them who become frail will need more care and support. Caregiving by adult children to their older parents is a major social issue, because families in modern societies are still the main source of care and support for older persons. A number of Governments have adopted budgetary allocations for cash benefits and services targeted towards families caring for an elderly family member. At the same time, policy measures are also necessary to prevent abuse or neglect of elders by family members and institutional caregivers.

56. In light of these changes and in the context of the current crises, intergenerational bonds among family members may be even more important today than in the past. There is a need to further explore how intergenerational solidarity could be strengthened through public action. One major question is what the role of society will be, through its provision of social services and social protection, in enhancing relations between generations at the family level.

Multigenerational living arrangements and intergenerational financial transfers

57. One way to observe the dynamics of intergenerational family relationships and how they have been changing over time is to look at trends in multigenerational living arrangements and intergenerational financial transfers. Multigenerational households, in which older persons live in three-generation settings, are common in many parts of the world, particularly in Asia. However, the prevalence of those living arrangements has been declining over the past several decades.[11]

58. In many countries, in particular those that have been developing quickly, the income sources of older persons have changed considerably. The proportion of older persons receiving public pension benefits has increased over time, as has the number of those who are able to rely on their own savings or who retire later, while the proportion of those who receive financial support from children has subsequently decreased.

59. These demographic and socio-economic transformations are affecting the pattern and mode of both private and public intergenerational transfers. The composition of per capita net transfers to the older population has been changing: the amount of per capita net public transfers to the older population has been increasing while, in contrast, the relative importance of per capita net familial transfers from younger to older persons has been declining. These results seem to indicate that older persons have been increasingly dependent upon public transfers, predominantly in the form of old-age pensions and medical care services, in supporting their retirement.

60. Of particular interest is that in times of economic hardship, the relatively young older persons (those in their 60s and early 70s) have provided financial assistance to their adult children and/or grandchildren. This phenomenon has been observed in many countries, including developed, developing and economies in transition, and appears to suggest that familial transfers may be more flexible and responsive than public transfers in coping with large-scale economic shocks. It also shows that the level of intergenerational solidarity of retired parents to their adult children is quite strong. In some countries, older persons who have been

[11] See "Living Arrangements of Older Persons Around the World", 2006, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division.

increasingly dependent upon a steady and secure public pension play a vital role in providing financial support — and intergenerational solidarity — to their adult offspring when they need it.

61. While it is too early to measure any similar effects or draw analogous conclusions from the current financial and economic crises, a related issue is the form of the pension systems. In some countries, there has been a move from a defined benefit pension plan to a defined contribution system, where the individual is responsible for managing a significant portion of his/her retirement investments. Significant decreases in equity markets from the financial crisis have had significant effects on the financial pension resources of older persons in those countries and therefore could also influence the intergenerational dynamics linked to intergenerational financial transfers.

Active ageing in the family and community

62. Promoting a harmonious relationship between development and demographic ageing implies a public policy that builds the capacities of older persons and promotes opportunities for them to contribute to society. This should be reinforced further by the promotion of active ageing, which consists of three pillars — older persons' health, participation and security. The overall premise is that active ageing will enable older persons to participate in the community, provided that they are given support, particularly from the younger generations. Active ageing rests on improving the health and quality of life throughout an individual's lifetime beginning in childhood.

63. The links between active ageing and intergenerational solidarity are therefore far from being restricted to the prevention of the social exclusion of older persons. Since active ageing increases the quality of life of an older person, that person's family members may benefit as well. To the extent that active ageing assists older persons in enjoying improved health and well-being, their needs for care and support from younger family members may be reduced and their ability to continue to contribute to family life will be enhanced.

64. The focus of active ageing is not necessarily to extend the working life of older persons, but to provide them with choices and opportunities for participation and interaction, including the opportunity to continue working at a reduced level of hours or to serve as mentors to their younger co-workers in the workplace, to start another career in a field of interest or to do volunteer work.

65. The establishment of centres of active ageing where young and old people can meet, interact and work together is important for the promotion of intergenerational relations and solidarity through common activities and quality of life for older persons as well as for the prevention of social exclusion. It is therefore recommended to promote intergenerational solidarity through initiatives that build partnerships and cooperation between youth and older persons' organizations and through age-friendly initiatives by cities and communities, including agrocentres in rural communities.

III. Action taken at the national level concerning family issues

66. As stated in paragraph 1 above, in its resolution 62/129, the General Assembly addressed several issues to Governments. A summary of national submissions is presented below.

67. In Algeria, a new civil and administrative code was enacted in February 2008 that covers family, particularly marriage, divorce and safeguarding the interests of minors. Other recently adopted measures include: the installation in 2007 of a National Family Council; the finalization in 2008 of an operational plan for the National Strategy on the Family; the National Strategy for the Integration and Advancement of Women (2008-2013); and the National Plan of Action for Children (2008-2015), with the support of the United Nations Children's Fund.

68. Austria hosted the Conference of Ministers of the Council of Europe responsible for Family Affairs in June 2009, on the theme "Public policies supporting the wish to have children: societal, economic and personal factors". In addition, the fifth Austrian Family Report 2009, a comprehensive research report issued every 10 years, will be submitted to Parliament in autumn of 2009. The report is designed to provide research findings on the situation of families and the challenges to be addressed by family policies.

69. In Azerbaijan, in March 2009, an article was added to the Constitution that expands the protection of the rights of children and creates a more child-friendly society following a referendum. During the past three years, basic family policy priorities have included strengthening social protection among mothers and children, including decreasing the maternal and child mortality rates, and legal provisions to ease the reconciliation of family and professional life for women.

70. Brazil has several family programmes: Bolsa Familia assists families living in poverty through cash transfers with conditionalities, such as school attendance by and vaccinations of children; the Programme of Integral Assistance to the Family contributes to preventing and combating social risk, servicing families through social care reference centres; the Family Health Programme provides comprehensive health-care assistance to families by teams of health professionals; and the Programme of the Fight against Domestic and Family Violence enabled a 2006 law that enforces legal protections against domestic violence.

71. In Chile, the Family Foundation is a private, non-profit institution established by the Government in 1990 to strengthen families and improve their quality of life. It has 15 family centres throughout the country that provide education and training and facilitate the participation of families and community groups in the improvement of the quality of life of communities. During the observance of the 2009 International Day of Families in Chile, the theme was "Say no to violence against women", and men from different backgrounds committed themselves to the campaign to end violence against women.

72. The Government of Colombia, together with the Colombian Institute for Family Well-being, has adopted several joint measures. They include intensifying the Institute's plan for 2007-2010 to improve conditions for families, children and adolescents, and implementing programmes promoting nutrition for young children, providing food security for older persons and increasing the ability of the Institute to reach potential beneficiaries. During 2009, the Institute will establish specialized

mobile units for the treatment of women who have been victims of sexual or family violence.

73. Finland launched a Policy Programme for the Well-being of Children, Youth and Families in December 2007, based on the theme of well-functioning and balanced parenthood as the core of families' well-being. A family centre model is under development with the objective of establishing a service system supporting families and promoting well-being among children and young people. At the base of the family policy are three pillars: a child-oriented society; thriving families with children; and the prevention of social exclusion.

74. Greece has in place several policy initiatives to balance family and professional life. They include several different provisions for paid and unpaid family leave of varied duration for marriage, childbirth, childcare, single-parent families, monitoring a child's school performance and caring for an ill child. Most recently, under a 2008-2009 collective labour agreement, family protection and work facilitation benefits were extended to foster parents.

75. In Indonesia, support and protection of the family is based on the overarching strategy of empowering families to manage their households and be resilient. Programmes for families are integrated into human resource and economic development programmes, and assist families with parenting issues, family planning, support for older persons and income generation. Special attention is given to empowering families living in poverty, those with children under five and those with adolescents and young adults.

76. In Japan, a prioritized strategy was enacted in December 2007 that requires implementation of a plan to harmonize work and family life. In February 2008, a strategy to eliminate waiting lists for nurseries was launched, and includes a substantial expansion in capacity of childcare services. In December 2008, amendments were enacted to the law on measures to support the development of the next generation in response to the rapid decline in the birth rate, and a decision was made to further combat the decline through a tax system reform.

77. In Malta, the Ministry for Social Policy has been strengthening national capacities to implement and monitor family policy in the fields of child day care, adoption agencies and fostering agencies. It has contributed towards the drafting of the Adoption Act and the Fostering Act, and has developed new criteria and standards for adoption and fostering agencies and for child day care. Research and consultation with stakeholders has also been undertaken to study compliance levels to the new standards and to identify and address obstacles.

78. The National Plan of Support to the Family 2004-2011 of Peru has set in motion public policies on family in every branch of Government. It has also established the Directorate of Support and Strengthening of the Family, which has carried out training of social workers on family issues, provided technical assistance to local government offices in support of policies to strengthen the family, conducted radio programmes to reduce family violence, established breastfeeding areas within businesses and worked to promote the reconciliation of work and family life.

79. The Philippines has expanded the powers, functions and membership of the National Steering Committee for the Family Week, now known as the National Committee on the Filipino Family. One of its responsibilities is to implement the

Decade Plan for the Filipino Family 2005-2015. Activities include training and education programmes in the area of strengthening family relationships, fostering family-friendly communities, expanding financial resources for poor families, research on family services and capacity-building to organizations that work with families.

80. Qatar has enacted several new initiatives regarding family. In particular, a new centre for disabled children, orphans and other children with special needs has been established. Recent policies and legislation include a new family code in 2006, a resolution regarding housing for families in 2007, and the review and improvement of policies regarding women's and children's health. The Doha International Institute for Family Studies and Development is pursuing research on family policy issues and has recently held several regional and international seminars, colloquiums and meetings.

81. The Republic of Korea enacted, in 2008, the "Act on Equal Employment and Reconciliation of Work and Family", which has enhanced the protection of pregnant women in the workforce and introduced a parental leave system and reduction of work hours to accommodate parental childcare. A comprehensive plan for improving childcare services has also been implemented, which includes new childcare facilities at places of work and public babysitting services. The "Family-Friendly Social Environment Promotion Act" was also enacted in 2008, and includes a family friendliness index survey and a certificate system for family-friendly corporations.

82. In the Russian Federation, 2008 was declared the Year of the Family. Since starting its new childbirth benefit in January 2007, whereby mothers are given maternal vouchers after the birth of more than one child, child-based subsidies have been enhanced, and subsidies for fathers and family members who provide childcare have been increased. Targeted support to families is also being enhanced, including to young, low-income, single-parent and foster families, and to families with many children.

83. In Switzerland, the former Office for Family Issues was replaced by the Office for Family, Generations and Society, which addresses issues relating to family, children, youth, older persons, intergenerational relations, as well as social policies in general. The Parliament also adopted a measure that went into effect in January 2008 to address discrimination in the tax code that affected married couples in which both spouses work compared with cohabitating couples in the same situation. A forthcoming tax reform is expected to lessen the tax burden on families with children.

84. Ukraine has joined the Secretary-General's Campaign to End Violence Against Women, and has established a national "Stop the Violence" campaign. Civil society has been very much involved in proposing legal measures and in awareness-raising, including a national network of male leaders in society united against gender-based and family violence. Other recent family policy programmes include creating conditions for balancing work and family life, social protection of families with children, specifically including those with many children, and training programmes for men on responsible fatherhood.

85. The Holy See's Pontifical Council for the Family held the Sixth World Meeting for Families on the theme "The family, teacher in human and Christian values" in January 2009 in Mexico City. A second major initiative of the Council

was the statement of His Eminence Ennio Cardinal Antonelli on the theme "The mass media: a gift and a responsibility for all, a commitment for the families", delivered in September 2008 during the twenty-third International Congress for the Family, which was held in Slovakia.

IV. Follow-up by the United Nations Programme on the Family

86. In its resolution 62/129, the General Assembly also recommended that United Nations agencies and bodies, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, research and academic institutions and the private sector play a supportive role in promoting the objectives of the International Year of the Family and contribute to developing strategies and programmes aimed at strengthening national capacities. In this regard, the Programme on the Family has undertaken a range of activities since the submission by the Secretary-General, in July 2007, of his previous report on the follow-up to the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family and beyond (A/62/132). Some of those activities include the following:

(a) Provision of technical assistance to the Maldives (2006-2007) and Armenia (2009), upon their request, in formulating draft national family policies. Different consultants were identified and recruited to work with the relevant country ministries. The provision of assistance to Armenia began in 2009 and is still ongoing;

(b) Co-organization with the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, in collaboration with the National Population and Family Development Board, Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development of the Government of Malaysia, of a training exercise, the international Capacity-building Workshop on National Family Policies, which was held in Kuala Lumpur, from 3 to 5 December 2008. The Workshop brought together representatives of Governments and non-governmental organizations from six countries. The main objective of the workshop was to increase the capacity of participants in assessing, formulating and monitoring national policies and strategies on family and integrating them into national social development plans;

(c) Organization of the United Nations expert group meeting on the theme "Family policy in a changing world: promoting social protection and intergenerational solidarity" in April 2009 in Doha (see para. 3 above);

(d) Observance of the International Day of Families (15 May) in 2008, under the theme "Fathers and families: responsibilities and challenges", and in 2009, under the theme "Mothers and families: challenges in a changing world", as well as participation and representation at conferences and meetings organized by Governments, the United Nations system, non-governmental organizations and academia.

V. Conclusions and recommendations

87. **The present report: analyses family policy and its relationship to social protection and intergenerational solidarity; highlights some recent national actions to strengthen and improve the well-being of families; and presents some**

recent activities of the United Nations Programme on the Family. The report includes country information on family policy based upon submissions received by Member States. As shown by the information presented in their submissions, many Member States are carrying out a wide range of policies to promote family well-being using several varied policy instruments.

88. **In the light of the above, the General Assembly may wish to consider the following recommendations:**

Family policy

(a) **Recommend that Governments establish an institutional mechanism, if they have not already done so, such as a Ministry of Family or focal point for family policy within an existing Ministry, with sufficient organizational, fiscal and human resources capacity to promote the family as a policy priority; develop family protection measures; ensure that all legislation considers the roles and rights of the family and family members; and promote partnership with all family stakeholders at different levels of governance;**

(b) **Encourage Governments to undertake information campaigns to educate people about family issues, such as preventing domestic violence; reducing harmful stigmas; and the sharing of responsibilities between men and women;**

(c) **Urge Governments to improve the implementation and enforcement of laws prohibiting harmful traditional practices towards women, children, older persons and other family members;**

(d) **Facilitate the balancing of work and family life by promoting gender equality inside the family; family-friendly work schedules for parents, including through the regulation of the private sector and provision of incentives; and adequate childcare arrangements, evaluated in terms of their quality and accessibility;**

(e) **Emphasize the need for the international community, regional intergovernmental entities and Governments to identify, and ensure follow-up support to, the factors that enable or lead to constructive family policy developments, including inviting regional intergovernmental entities to facilitate the exchange of good policies and practices;**

(f) **Invite Governments and regional intergovernmental entities to provide for more systematic national and regional data, respectively, on family and child well-being, including data on major family and child problems and best practices in policy responses and, where possible, their effects, and including indicators on social protection and intergenerational solidarity;**

(g) **Invite Governments to recall that, in its resolution 59/111, the General Assembly decided to celebrate the anniversary of the International Year of the Family on a 10-year basis and further invite Governments to begin preparations for the upcoming twentieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family in 2014 and use the anniversary to advance family policymaking;**

Social protection and the family

(h) **Invite Governments to stimulate public debate and consultations on family-oriented and gender- and child-sensitive social protection policies;**

(i) **Encourage countries to adopt holistic approaches to policies and programmes that confront child and family poverty, social exclusion and other social risks. This holistic approach should be applied to such areas as the reduction of income poverty, along with ensuring access to health care, education, food aid and social services;**

(j) **Urge countries to make reductions of child poverty a priority, guided by the Millennium Development Goals, setting specific targets and monitoring their achievements;**

Intergenerational solidarity and families

(k) **Invite Governments to facilitate activities to promote intergenerational activities through the establishment of community centres for younger and older persons, planned and funded by the community and facilitated by older persons' alliances with government and civil society;**

(l) **Urge Governments to promote policies and programmes geared at assessing the vulnerability of younger and older generations and reducing or preventing risk through various social protection strategies, including long-term health-care support and its oversight.**